developer to determine best ways for streamlining automated routines, and perhaps fine-tuning them for more efficient execution.

A bug reporting module is provided within software **205** and adapted to compile a list of open bugs still affecting a site. This report may be included in production database **200** so that production status may be obtained concerning the process of fixing or working around existing bugs in a particular web site. In this way, a third party may observe the progress of fine-tuning and maintaining automation of a web site after a site is added. If a particular web site is currently not fully automated because of bugs, which have occurred since automation, a developer charged to the site may be notified as a matter of priority, to escalate work on the effected site.

An error dump module is provided within software **205** and adapted to compile a detailed error report listing all of the errors have occurred with a particular site including all of the parameters connected to such errors. This report logs the type of error, the point of error, the cause of the error, and the system result of the error. Any personal information connected to the error such as user ID, credit card information, Social Security information, or any other personal information is automatically discarded before the error is entered into a dump file. In this way, errors may be researched in detail without releasing or compromising any user information.

In one embodiment of the present invention specialized modules as described above may in some instances be distributed within servers **228**, **229**, and **230** as self-contained modules adapted to report information back to software instance **205**. In other embodiments, the specialized modules described above may be executed from within server **201** of FIG. **9**. There are many possibilities. Breaking software **205** down into a plurality of specialized modules allows for independent and succinct reports and activity logs which are dedicated to revealing specific conditions and states related to tracked websites.

It will be apparent to one with skill in the art that the method and apparatus of the present invention provides an automated way to obtain virtually any type of information from a web site or hosting server. Furthermore, dividing the functionality of software **205** into a plurality of dedicated modules allows data to be quickly organized into usable format for access by developers. The method and apparatus of the present invention greatly enhances the production of web site developers in that they are not required to physically obtain the information through traditional methods. Moreover, efficiency in creating compatible routines for enabling automated access and site manipulation is greatly enhanced by providing developers with a wealth of information that is immediately accessible.

The inventor intends that the architecture, as well as the general process illustrated herein represent exemplary embodiments for practicing the present invention. There are many other embodiments wherein the method and apparatus of present invention may be practiced. The method and apparatus of the present invention may be practiced via private individuals on the Internet, businesses operating on a WAN connected to the Internet, businesses operating via private WAN, and so on. There are many customizable situations.

The present invention as taught herein and above should be afforded the broadest of scope. The spirit and scope of the present invention is limited only by the claims that follow.

What is claimed is:

1. A software tool for enabling automated tracking of activity related to the status and usage statistics of a plurality of Web sites on a data packet network comprising:

a network communication capability for establishing network communication between the software tool and the tracked Web sites;

a plurality of data-reporting modules for obtaining and reporting data about tracked Web sites;

a data input function for accepting data from the reporting modules and from external sources;

a data recording function for recording and logging the data received from the reporting modules and from the external sources; and

a data management function for organizing and storing the received data and rendering the data accessible for use in software development for creating functional software routines for enabling automated access to information and functional services offered through the Web sites.

2. The software tool of claim **1**, wherein the data-packet-network is the Internet network.

3. The software tool of claim **2**, wherein the network communication capability is established through hyperlinking to data reporting modules embedded within the tracked sites.

4. The software tool of claim **3**, wherein the software tool is an internet-based application executing and running on an Internet server.

5. The software tool of claim **4**, wherein the software tool is accessible through a network-browser application.

6. The software tool of claim **4**, wherein the plurality of data-reporting modules are characterized by the types of data reported by each module.

7. The software tool of claim **6**, wherein the external data sources include a software engineer.

8. The software tool of claim **7**, wherein the Web sites are mined for data for the purpose of enabling the software engineer to generate software scripts designed to provide automated access to functional services based on data results.

9. The software tool of claim **8**, further comprising a module for notifying the software engineer of any changes or updates to individual ones of the tracked Web sites.

10. The software tool of claim **9**, further comprising a module for testing software routines written by the software engineer concerning individual ones of the tracked Web sites.

11. A system for enabling automated tracking of activity related to the status and usage statistics of a plurality of Web sites on a data packet network comprising:

a site-tracking server connected to the network and adapted for communication with other servers connected to the network;

a site-tracking software application residing in the site-tracking server, the site tracking software comprising a network communication capability, a plurality of data-reporting modules, a data input function, a data recording function, and a data management function for organizing and storing data;

a data repository accessible to the site-tracking server for storing data; and

a computerized workstation connected to the network for enabling access to the site tracking software, the data repository, and the site-tracking server;

wherein the information accessible to the computerized workstation is used for creating functional software